

CAIN'S TRUE ORIGIN: SON OF ADAM OR OF THE SERPENT?

THE SERPENT'S BLOODLINE: A TRIAL OF SOURCES

Bibliographic and Reference Document

*Primary Sources: Hebrew Canon · Aramaic Targumim · Babylonian Talmud
Palestinian Midrash · Coptic Gnostic Codices · Apostolic Literature*

Compendium of works consulted in the production of the documentary film of the same name. Sources are arranged in chronological order from their earliest datable stratum. Each entry notes the work's nature, period of composition, relevance to the central narrative inquiry, and recommended critical edition.

Chronological order · Approximate period · Notes on narrative use

Introductory Note

This document accompanies the documentary film *Cain's True Origin: Son of Adam or of the Serpent?* The film examines the most consequential grammatical crux in the Hebrew book of Genesis — the verb *qaniti* and the particle *et* in Genesis 4:1 — and the four-tradition reading history that the canonical silence generated: Aramaic targumic, rabbinic Talmudic, gnostic Coptic, and apostolic Greek. The central inquiry is not biographical but hermeneutical: why does a word placed in Eve's mouth at the birth of the first human child open, simultaneously, toward divine creation, toward grammatical partnership, and toward a paternity the text refuses to name?

Dates of composition follow current critical consensus. Where scholarly debate persists — as it does for the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the Apocryphon of John, and the tractate Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer — the range is given and the relevant scholarly positions identified. No source is cited as confirmation of a verdict the text itself withholds. Where a tradition asserts a claim, it is presented as that tradition's claim, not as the film's conclusion.

This compendium is offered as a free research companion. The primary texts belong to every reader. Wherever possible, publicly accessible critical editions and digitised manuscripts are cited alongside the standard scholarly references.

I. Mesopotamian and Pre-Biblical Substrate (c. 2600–600 BCE)

The serpent as a divine or semi-divine figure — ambivalent, generative, and associated with wisdom, defilement, and cosmological hierarchy — is attested across Sumerian and Akkadian literature centuries before the composition of the Hebrew Pentateuch. These works do not directly produce the Genesis narrative but supply the iconographic and mythological substrate against which the priestly and Yahwistic authors of Genesis defined themselves.

c. 2100–1600 BCE (Old Babylonian recensions)

The Epic of Gilgamesh (Standard Babylonian version: c. 1300–1000 BCE)

The most complete Akkadian literary epic. Tablets I–XI. The serpent as thief of immortality (Tablet XI) and as ambiguous liminal figure operates within a conceptual world in which human origins, divine anger, and primordial loss are structurally parallel to Genesis 2–4. Critical edition: Andrew George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (Oxford, 2003), 2 vols.

c. 1900–1700 BCE (Old Babylonian period)

Atrahasis Epic

Akkadian account of human creation, divine frustration, and flood. Establishes the narrative type of primordial transgression followed by catastrophic divine response. Critical edition: W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford, 1969).

c. 2600–2000 BCE

Sumerian Paradise Myths (Enki and Ninhursag)

Sumerian myth of a primordial garden (Dilmun), transgression involving prohibited plants, and divine curse — the most direct structural analogue to Genesis 2–3 in the Mesopotamian record. Accessible in: Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Philadelphia, 1944).

II. Hebrew Biblical Canon (c. 950–400 BCE)

The foundational text under examination. The Pentateuch in its final form reflects multiple compositional layers — Yahwistic (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomistic (D), and Priestly (P) — whose relative chronology and boundaries remain debated. Genesis 4:1, with its anomalous verb and particle, is commonly assigned to J; Genesis 5, the genealogy of the divine image, to P. The tension between these two chapters is, in part, a redactional seam.

c. 950–600 BCE (Yahwistic layer); final Priestly redaction c. 500–400 BCE

Genesis 3–5 (Hebrew Masoretic Text)

The primary evidence: the serpent's curse (3:14–15), Eve's naming of Cain (4:1), the genealogy of Adam's image (5:1–3). The verb *qanah* in 4:1 and the particle *et* are the grammatical cruxes examined in the film. Critical edition: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977; 5th ed. 1997). Electronic: Accordance Hebrew Bible with Westminster Leningrad Codex.

c. 3rd century BCE (translation); Codex Vaticanus c. 325–350 CE

Septuagint (LXX) — Genesis 4:1

The oldest Greek translation, rendering *et-YHWH* as *dia tou Theou* — 'through God' — the earliest extant avoidance of the particle's literal reading. Critical edition: Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935; rev. R. Hanhart, 2006).

c. 390–405 CE

Latin Vulgate — Genesis 4:1 (Jerome)

Jerome's translation renders *et-YHWH* as *per Deum* — 'through God' — consistent with the Septuagint's avoidance of the literal particle reading. Jerome's prefaces to the Pentateuch document his awareness of the Hebrew grammatical problem. Edition: *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969; 5th ed. 2007).

III. Aramaic Targumim (c. 2nd century BCE – 8th century CE)

The Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew scriptures, composed and transmitted for synagogue reading, frequently expand the biblical text with interpretive tradition. The Targumim are critical witnesses for this inquiry because they name what the Hebrew text leaves unnamed — and what they name is Samael.

c. 2nd century CE (core tradition); surviving manuscripts 11th–14th century CE

Targum Onkelos — Genesis 4:1

The authoritative Babylonian Aramaic translation, rendering *et-YHWH* as *min qodam YHWH* — 'from before the LORD' — a deferential avoidance identical in function to the Septuagint and Vulgate. Critical edition: A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

7th–8th century CE redaction (preserving older traditions, possibly 2nd–5th century CE)

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan — Genesis 4:1

The principal witness for the prosecution. The Targum explicitly states that Eve had conceived from Samael, the angel of the LORD — the first Aramaic text to name the angel by name in connection with Cain's conception. The date of the core tradition is disputed: Ginsburger and Hayward place certain materials as early as the 2nd–3rd century CE; the anachronistic names of Muhammad's wives in the text establish the 7th century as the floor for the

surviving recension. Critical edition: M. Ginsburger, *Pseudo-Jonathan* (Berlin, 1903); E.G. Clarke, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1984).

Surviving manuscripts: 13th–16th century CE; core traditions: 3rd–6th century CE

Targum Neofiti — Genesis 3:15

The Palestinian Targum discovered in the Vatican Library in 1956. Its expansion of Genesis 3:15 — the curse upon the serpent — develops the 'seed of the serpent' as a genealogical line opposed to the seed of the woman across historical time, grounding the narrative of two bloodlines in the synagogue lectionary. Critical edition: A. Diez Macho, *Neophyti 1*, vol. I — Genesis (Madrid: CSIC, 1968).

Various manuscript traditions; printed editions from 16th century CE

Fragment Targum — Genesis 3:15 and 4:1

Preserves variant Palestinian traditions on the serpent's seed and on Eve's speech at Cain's birth. Supplements Neofiti on the two-seed genealogy. Edition: M.L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch*, 2 vols. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980).

IV. Babylonian Talmud and Rabbinic Midrash (c. 3rd–9th century CE)

The Babylonian Talmud preserves, in its final Stammaitic redaction, materials from the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods (1st–5th century CE). The zuhama tradition — the filth or pollution of the serpent injected into Eve — is one of the most consequential rabbinic traditions for this inquiry, precisely because it was transmitted in the most orthodox of contexts and yet generates the most dangerous implication regarding Cain's conception. The tractate Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, a later midrashic compilation, names Samael explicitly and in detail.

Final redaction c. 6th–7th century CE; Stammaitic layer c. 500–700 CE

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 146a

Records the teaching that when the serpent came upon Eve, it injected into her a *zuhama* — a filth or pollution — which was later lifted from Israel at Sinai but remained in the nations. Primary witness to the physical/biological register of the serpent's contact with the first woman in orthodox rabbinic tradition. Standard edition: *Talmud Bavli* (Vilna: Romm, 1880–1886); English: I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino, 1935–1952).

Final redaction c. 6th–7th century CE

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yevamot 103b

Parallel attestation of the *zuhama* tradition, confirming its distribution across multiple tractates and its status as received teaching rather than isolated speculation. Same edition as above.

Final redaction c. 6th–7th century CE

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 22b

Third attestation of the *zuhama* tradition, here in the context of purity concerns between Jews and gentiles. Completes the tripartite documentary record of the tradition across the Talmudic corpus. Same edition as above.

c. 8th–9th century CE

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 21

Late midrashic compilation describing Samael descending into the garden mounted upon the serpent as upon a camel, and engaging Eve in a seduction that is physical in its description. The most explicit rabbinic account of Samael's role in the events of Genesis 3. Critical edition: G. Friedlander, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* (London, 1916; repr. New York: Hermon Press, 1965). Hebrew edition: C.M. Horowitz (Frankfurt, 1882).

V. Second Temple and Enochic Literature (c. 300 BCE – 100 CE)

The Enochic corpus and related Second Temple texts develop an elaborate demonology and angelology that provides the conceptual framework within which Samael, the fallen angels, and the corruption of the human line are theorised. These works are not primary witnesses to the Cain tradition but supply the theological infrastructure that makes the targumic and rabbinic traditions intelligible.

c. 300–200 BCE (Book of Watchers); composite work c. 300 BCE – 100 CE

1 Enoch (Ethiopic Enoch)

The Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36) provides the foundational account of fallen angels corrupting humanity. While the Watchers in 1 Enoch are distinct from the Samael tradition, they establish the category of angelic beings

who cross the boundary between divine and human — the category within which later interpreters would locate the serpent of Genesis 3. Critical edition: Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Leiden: Brill, 1985); G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

c. 160–150 BCE

Book of Jubilees

Retelling of Genesis 1 through Exodus 14, expanding the narrative of the fallen angels and the corruption of the human line. Jubilees 3–4 retells the Cain and Abel narrative without explicitly adopting the Samael-paternity tradition but develops the theme of Cain's moral alienation from Adam's line. Critical edition: J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols. (Louvain: Peeters, 1989).

VI. Coptic Gnostic Literature (Nag Hammadi Codices) (Composition: c. 2nd century CE; Manuscripts: c. 350–400 CE)

Discovered near Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt, in December 1945. Thirteen leather-bound codices containing fifty-two Coptic texts, copied in the second half of the 4th century, many preserving Greek originals of the 2nd century CE. The gnostic texts do not interpret Genesis — they invert it. Within that inversion, the origin of Cain is explicitly addressed in multiple tractates, consistently attributing his conception to the demiurgic power identified in some texts as Yaldabaoth, Saklas, and Samael.

Greek original: c. 2nd century CE (cited by Irenaeus of Lyon, c. 180 CE); Coptic: NHC II,1; BG 8502,2; NHC III,1; NHC IV,1

Apocryphon of John (Secret Book of John)

The most important gnostic witness. Four copies in the Nag Hammadi and Berlin Gnostic Codex collections — a frequency indicating its centrality to this tradition. The text names the demiurge Yaldabaoth also as Saklas and Samael ('the blind god'), describes his defilement of Eve, and states that he begat two sons — named Yave and Eloim before being called, 'with a view to deceive,' Cain and Abel. Critical edition: Frederik Wisse and Michael Waldstein, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); English: Frederik Wisse in J.M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), pp. 104–123.

c. 2nd–3rd century CE; Coptic: NHC II,4

Hypostasis of the Archons (Reality of the Rulers)

Describes the rulers of the lower world pursuing the spiritual woman to defile her; she escapes as a tree, leaving a shadow or earthly Eve in their hands. The defilement is real in the material register; the spiritual seed is preserved separately. Establishes the two-Eve and two-seed structure that explains the Sethian genealogy of light. Critical edition and translation: Bentley Layton, *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974); in Robinson, *NHL*, pp. 161–169.

c. 3rd century CE; Coptic: NHC II,3

Gospel of Philip

Sacramental collection of sayings. Includes the sentence deployed in the film as the prosecution's most compressed witness: that first adultery came into being, and afterward murder, and the murderer was the son of the serpent. A syllogism of paternity in three clauses. Translation: Wesley W. Isenberg in Robinson, *NHL*, pp. 139–160; critical edition: Bentley Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

VII. Apostolic and Early Christian Literature (c. 50–120 CE)

The apostolic literature addresses Cain within a moral and typological framework. The First Letter of John provides the key New Testament witness — a single verse deploying the preposition of origin (ek tou ponerou) in reference to Cain — whose interpretation the film examines as both an ethical and a potentially genealogical claim. Irenaeus of Lyon supplies the earliest external witness to the gnostic traditions examined in Section VI.

c. 90–100 CE

1 John 3:12 (Greek New Testament)

The only New Testament verse to address Cain's origin explicitly. The Greek *ek tou ponerou* — 'out of the evil one' — uses the preposition of derivation and source. The film examines whether this phrase operates as ethical typology, as genealogical statement, or as both simultaneously — and why the author chose this particular preposition rather than a comparative or analogical construction. Critical text: *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

c. 175–185 CE

Irenaeus of Lyon — *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies), Book I

The earliest patristic catalogue of gnostic systems, providing external attestation for the Apocryphon of John tradition by c. 180 CE — confirming the second-century circulation of the Cainite genealogy examined in the film. Critical edition: A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *Irenée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies*, Sources Chrétiennes 263–264 (Paris: Cerf, 1979); English: A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

VIII. Modern Critical Studies (19th–21st century)

Secondary scholarship bearing directly on the film's central sources and questions.

Fossum, Jarl E. *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985.

Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews*. 7 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–1938. [Vol. I, 'Cain and Abel'; Vol. V, notes on Genesis 4:1.]

Kugel, James L. *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998. [Chapter on Cain's birth, pp. 145–164.]

Layton, Bentley. *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions*. New York: Doubleday, 1987.

Nickelsburg, George W.E. *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Pagels, Elaine. *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Random House, 1979.

Robinson, James M., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. 3rd rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990.

Schäfer, Peter. *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Stuckenbruck, Loren T. *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*. Translated by John J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. [Critical commentary on Genesis 4:1, pp. 289–298.]

Closing Note

This compendium is a work of editorial scholarship prepared in support of a documentary film. It does not constitute a theological position. The traditions listed above — Hebrew canonical, Aramaic targumic, Babylonian rabbinic, Palestinian midrashic, Coptic gnostic, and apostolic Greek — do not form a unified interpretive system and are not presented as one. Each tradition is the product of its own historical moment, its own theological commitments, and its own reading of a text that all of them found, in different ways, impossible to close.

The film does not render a verdict on the paternity of Cain. It argues, instead, that the question was built into the canonical text deliberately — that the verb *qaniti*, the particle *et*, the silence of Genesis 5, and the war of two seeds in Genesis 3:15 constitute not a riddle with a hidden solution but a wound the priestly author opened on purpose, to mark the entry of the first murder into the human story with the appropriate register of indeterminacy. Readers who wish to pursue the primary sources directly are encouraged to do so.

The secondary scholarship cited in Section VIII represents the academic consensus and the most rigorous dissenting positions as of the date of production. It is not exhaustive. Readers seeking deeper engagement are directed especially to Kugel's *Traditions of the Bible* for the targumic and midrashic material, and to Waldstein and Wisse's critical synopsis for the Apocryphon of John.

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